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AUTHOR Cutler, Morris
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ABSTRACT

The Radio Language Arts Project (RLAP) is a pilot program being developed in Kenya to provide a cost effective English-as-a-second-language program via radio to rural children. The RLAP will use an integrative language arts approach focusing on language function, meaning, and communication activities, with listening and oral language preceding reading and writing. Each 20- to 30-minute broadcast will consist of several brief segments of varied learning activities designed to teach or maintain a skill, and will allow as many as four to eight pupil responses per minute. Children in the primary grades will receive English instruction via daily broadcasts; will talk, write, and respond physically throughout the program; and will receive immediate results to stimulate learning. A teacher's guide will provide classroom teachers with information about each lesson and suggestions for their participation. After each broadcast, classroom teachers will direct additional oral and written language exercises. Evaluation of the project will include trained observers noting pupil reaction, and a measure to compare the achievement of pupils taught by RLAP with that of pupils taught by conventional methods. If successful, the RLAP will provide improved instruction of English at a lower cost to a greater number of students, and its design will allow for its transfer, intact or with alterations, to other geographical locations to meet their needs. (HTH)

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COVER SHEETS FOR

USING RADIO'S POTENTIAL TO TEACH

LANGUAGE ARTS

A Program Description

Author: Morris Cutler

Present Position:

Language Arts Specialist
for Academy for Educational Development
Serving with the Radio Language Arts Project
in Nairobi, Kenya.

Previous Experience:

Administrator with Los Angeles Unified
Schools
Associate in International Education,
Teachers College,
Columbia University.

Address:

AED - Radio Language Arts Project
Nairobi (ID)
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

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Can children be taught to read and understand oral English using radio as the major medium of instruction?

This is the purpose of a pilot project which is being developed for Kenya primary public schools. As do many developing nations, Kenya suffers from an expanding school population and a scarcity of qualified teachers, particularly in rural schools. The Radio Language Arts Project is an attempt to provide a language program pertinent to the needs of children outside the urban areas and to improve the quality of the instruction of English as a second language in a cost effective manner.

The instructional design is based upon methodology successfully applied in the Nicaragua Radio Mathematics Project implemented by Stanford University in 1973. This project was a joint venture of the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Nicaragua Ministry of Public Education. An evaluation of the project indicated that students in the experimental radio classes scored significantly higher on tests than their non-experimental counterparts. Because of the success and design of the Radio Mathematics Project, its methodology was considered applicable to other subject areas in other nations.

Background

Pupils in Kenyan public primary schools are taught in their mother tongue for the initial three years. As delineated in the Kenyan statement of objectives, instruction in English as a second language begins the first school year and by the end of the third year, "the child should have acquired a sufficient command of vocabulary and language patterns to enable him to use English as the medium of learning." Starting in standard 4 (grade 4), English becomes the language of instruction and by the end of standard 7 (grade 7) pupils are required to pass the Comprehensive Proficiency Examination to qualify for secondary school enrollment.

With the elimination of primary school fees in 1973, enrolment mushroomed, straining the economic and educational resources of the nation's schools. Instructional materials, schools, faculty housing and especially, qualified teachers, were in short supply. Approximately thirty-five percent of Kenya's primary teachers, are presently unqualified. To meet the aspirations of the people and the growing needs of the nation's children, AID contracted with the Academy for Educational Development (AED) to work with the Ministry of Basic Education to develop a pilot project which will result in increased comprehension of oral and written English with radio serving as the basic instructional medium for pupils in standards 1, 2, and 3

Curriculum and Methodology

By contract, the Radio Language Arts Project curriculum must follow the official goals of Kenya's Ministry of Basic Education. Presently the Ministry is developing the Primary Education Project by which the government intends to introduce far-reaching changes in the primary curriculum to provide equitable access to education for all children. Members of the RLAP are participating in committee activities which develop English and mother-tongue language programs to facilitate communication of curriculum changes and to insure the RLAP's conformity with the basic objectives.

While the goals of the RLAP and the Primary Education Project are the same, the means by which they are to be achieved will differ. (In Kenya, English is taught as a second language and parallels the basic skills of the language program in the mother tongue.) The RLAP will use an intergrated language arts approach which will focus on language function, emphasize meaning and communication activities. Listening and oral language will precede reading and writing. Readiness experiences in both reading and writing will be implemented from the start of the program. Each facet of language arts will be used to reenforce and expand the others.

Instruction will require active participation and response by pupils to enhance learning. Children will talk, write and respond physically throughout the program. Each skill will be carefully developed, presented and practiced in short frequent lessons. Pupils will receive immediate knowledge of results to stimulate learning.

Materials content is based upon criteria which will assist the student in learning a specific skill and will relate to the learner's needs and interests in his rural environment. Materials will be screened to ensure that they are appropriate and reflect the values of the culture.

Since cost is a major concern of the project, efforts will be made to reduce the materials which will be supplied to each class. Books require not only paper and printing but also distribution, which is costly and difficult. During the first year and part of year two, charts and worksheets will be developed, but as children become proficient in writing, worksheets will be phased out. Whenever possible, materials found in local classrooms will be utilized. Teachers will be asked to write exercises on the board and after they learn to write, pupils will be asked to copy materials from the board and create some of their own reading matter.

LESSON DESIGN

Children in standards 1, 2, 3 will receive their English instruction via daily radio broadcasts, 20 to 30 minutes in length. Each broadcast lesson will consist of two parts, the radio broadcast and post-broadcasts activities directed by the classroom teacher. There will be 165 broadcasts developed for each of the three years to correspond with the Kenya school year.

Each radio lesson will consist of several brief segments of varied learning activities. A segment being an independent unit which teaches or maintains a skill. Using the principle of distributive learning, each segment will provide short intensive lesson, 2 to 6 minutes in duration. An instructional segment may be related to another in the same radio lesson or it may be independent of other segments. Segments can be used for instruction of new skills or maintenance of previously taught skills.

In order to retain interest during the length of the broadcast, the Radio Mathematics Project had great success with segmented learning periods requiring active participation by the students. The RLAP will follow this design, planning for as many as 4 to 8 pupil responses per minute in some segments. Learning segments will be interspersed with change of pace activities such as

singing, clapping, choral and motor activities which will utilize language skills and vocabulary previously taught.

Role of Classroom Teacher

Recognizing that teachers' education and professional training will vary greatly, the radio lessons are designed to provide the major thrust of instruction. But teachers will have important functions to perform since their attitude towards the radio lessons will influence their pupils' reactions and enhance the effects of the radio program.

A teacher's guide will provide classroom teachers with information about each lesson and suggestions for their participation. Teachers will be asked to assist in preparing the classes for each broadcast. During the radio lesson they will be urged to actively participate and directions will be included in the broadcasts specifically for teachers. After each broadcast, teachers will direct additional language exercises, oral and written. Specific vocabulary and learning exercises will be displayed in the teachers guide, but teachers will be encouraged to adapt them according to the needs of their children.

Evaluation

The project design will provide for two types of evaluation, formative and summative. Curriculum and script writers require a method for determining the effectiveness of their lessons in meeting the intended curriculum objectives. A trained team of observers will visit classrooms during the broadcasts to note the reactions of pupils and report to the designers on various aspects of the lesson. Each lesson will be observed by a minimum of one team. Observers will be alerted by the writers to comment on aspects of each lesson. Weekly tests will be used to determine if the objectives of the lessons have been achieved.

The important question which the RLAP must answer is: Can children learn to read and understand English from radio instruction? If they can, then the next question is: Do they learn more from radio instructions than from conventional classroom instruction?

A carefully planned summative evaluation will be designed to compare achievement of pupils taught by regular methods. For pilot testing schools have been randomly selected from seven target areas of Kenya. Classes from the preceding year in the same school will serve as control groups. Measuring instruments will be carefully constructed using a large sampling of items selected at random from the curriculum. Care will be taken to insure that results will not be influenced by intuitive judgements.

Conclusion

Language instruction by radio offers unique challenges and advantages. If successful, the RLAP will provide improved instruction of English at a lower cost to a greater number of students, particularly in rural areas. The design of the program will allow for its transfer to other geographical locations, intact or with alterations, to meet local needs. For many emerging nations presently commiting large percentages of resources towards basic education, the results of the Radio Language Arts Project can fill a critical need in their struggle for self-fulfillment.

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